
**NOTES FOR
MEC
WELCOMING
SPEECH:** Coastal & Marine Tourism Working Group

Date: 22-27 MAY 2022

Venue: SOUTHERN SUN INTERNATIONAL BOARDWALK

About the conference

The second International Conference of the African Marine Waste Network, titled Towards Zero Plastics to the Seas of Africa, represents the premier event in SST's calendar.

The conference will focus on the actions and interventions that need to take place at every step of the value chain – including measurements of progress, social and economic considerations, municipal actions, capacity building and education, research, policy and legislation, collaboration, and networking – to move Africa towards the vision of no plastics entering the environment and, ultimately, the seas.

The primary objective of the conference is producing a Guide to Developing National and Regional Action Plans, with a Decision-Making Framework for Management of Plastics in Africa. Theme "Towards zero plastics to the seas of Africa".

The Guidebook is envisioned to be, in essence, a clear framework outlining the actions that must be taken locally within African countries, nationally and regionally, to combat plastic waste.

In complete alignment with the call from UNEA and UNEP to assist African countries develop such plans, this output will guide steps that can be adapted to the circumstances that exist in their countries, thereby explicitly contributing to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals. Other outputs include smaller publications (including summaries of all contributions).

DEDEAT's contribution

The Department has assisted the Sustainable Seas Trust with procurement of venues and facilities at a tune of R500 000.00 whilst hosting their second international conference of the African Marine Waste Network titled "*Towards Zero Plastics to the Seas of Africa*"

THE RATIONALE....

DEDEAT group has the mandate to ensure the advancement of economic development, tourism, and environmental imperatives in the Eastern Cape Province.

We thus appreciate the fact that without a proper marine ecosystem, all our efforts to grow our economy and more importantly sustain such growth would be undermined. Tourism is one of the prioritized sectors for economic development in the Province, and it requires intensive support to thrive and continue to contribute towards the economic growth of the Province. Supporting this conference forms part of our efforts to support the sector but also responds to our mandate of managing the environment including biodiversity. On

biodiversity, we have the mandate to conserve the diversity of landscapes, ecosystems, habitats, biological communities, populations, species & genes and promote the conservation & sustainable use of natural resources.

We value tourism because it creates jobs quicker and contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). That dent in tourism would reduce about 10% of what tourism contributes towards our National Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The impact of such a change would have huge multiplier effects on our economy.

I am also told that one of the biggest threats to our maritime environment is plastic debris that finds itself into our waters. This debris then gets ingested or suffocate several of our marine species leading to a number of them dying and consequently upsetting our marine ecosystem.

As a department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs, and Tourism, we know that plastic littering is bad for our economy and efforts to create employment and promote tourism. We know that plastics in our coastal areas will lead to a loss of income for coastal communities and the marine industry at large.

It will also lead to the loss of biodiversity and related ecosystem services. As a province that boasts approximately **800 kilometers** of untouched and pristine coastline with splendid beaches, we welcome the efforts of the Sustainable Seas Trust to host the Second International Conference in our province, and in South Africa.

Gqeberha has one of the southern white whales and the great white shark within its boundaries. The city is popular for its multitude of Blue Flags and breath-taking beaches. There are a variety of tours that can be experienced by our local and international tourists in Gqeberha, where one can admire birds, whales, and dolphins..

For choosing us, we say thank you.